



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **First Birthing Facility in North Dakota Recognized as “Baby Friendly”**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is excited to announce that the Quentin Burdick Medical Center in Belcourt is the first birthing facility in North Dakota to be recognized as “Baby Friendly” through Baby Friendly USA. The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is a global initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). This initiative is designed to get hospitals to adhere to the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.

“This is a great success for North Dakota in increasing our rates of breastfeeding and by doing so, decreasing the risks of obesity, type II diabetes and other chronic diseases,” said BriAnna Wanner, Maternal and Child Health Nutritionist for the North Dakota Department of Health. “We congratulate Quentin Burdick Medical Center for this accomplishment and for making breastfeeding support and education a priority in their facility.”

The implementation of the BFHI in the United States is based on the fact that human milk fed through the mother’s own breast is the normal way for human infants to be nourished. There is an abundance of scientific evidence that points to lower risks for certain diseases and improved health outcomes for both mothers and babies who breastfeed.

Breastfeeding is the natural biological conclusion to pregnancy and an important mechanism for the continued normal development of the infant. With the correct information and the right support in place, most women who choose to breastfeed are able to successfully achieve their goal.

Because the process of attaining Baby-Friendly designation compels facilities to examine, challenge and modify longstanding policies and procedures, the process also strengthens the organization by enhancing leadership skills, increasing staff competence, and improves patient satisfaction. Although the hospital is not, and should not be, the only place a mother receives

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support for breastfeeding, hospitals provide a unique and critical link between the breastfeeding support provided prior to and after delivery.

"Since Quentin Burdick Medical Center has implemented the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, there has been a significant increase in the number of mothers breastfeeding at the time of discharge from the hospital," said Jeanna Strong, Turtle Mountain WIC Director. "WIC clients are also reporting that they are receiving consistent messages between WIC, Quentin Burdick clinic and hospital staff."

Mothers who give birth at Baby-Friendly hospitals and birthing centers are more likely to initiate exclusive breastfeeding and more likely to sustain breastfeeding at six months and one year of age, perhaps because of the institutional support for breastfeeding at these facilities. In the United States, new mothers exposed to at least six of the 10 steps were 13 times more likely to continue breastfeeding at six weeks postpartum when compared to mothers who had not been exposed to any of the ten steps during their birthing hospitalization. Additionally, adherence to the ten steps decreases racial, ethnic, and sociocultural disparities in breastfeeding rates in U.S. hospitals.

"Through partnership with Quentin Burdick Medical Center, WIC is continuing our work to support all mothers in reaching their breastfeeding goal," said Strong.

Breastfeeding is associated with decreased risk for infant morbidity and mortality as well as maternal morbidity and provides optimal infant nutrition. Healthy People 2020 established breastfeeding initiation, continuation, and exclusivity as national priorities.

More information about the Baby Friendly Designation and breastfeeding can be found by visiting [www.ndhealth.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.ndhealth.gov/breastfeeding). For more information, contact BriAnna Wanner, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4529.

– 30 –

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